University Press Is Highly Regarded in Nation

LSU Press in its brief history has become one of the leading university presses in the South and ranks in the top one-third of all university presses in the nation.

Established as a separate division of the University in 1935, the press since that time has published 350 books of which about 200 are still in print. More than half of these 350 have been written by members of the University faculty.

The press, located in the Hill Building, has no physical plant but has all its printing done by contract with commercial printers, most of which are in New York.

Books published by the press are scholarly publications by and for scholars of regional publications about Louisiana and the South. Major interest is on the Civil War. LSU Press now has 17 books about the war on the Library of Congress' Selected Reading List of the American Civil War. This number is greater than that of any other publisher in the nation.

University Press had its beginning in 1931 when the first of a series of studies reporting research in varied fields of graduate scholarship was published. The press was officially established in 1935 to handle all publishing of the University.

Marcus M. Wilkerson, professor of journalism, was named director and at that time was the only staff member. He was director until his death in 1953. He was followed by Donald Ellegood who served until he went to the University of Washington Press in Seattle in 1962. Richard Wentworth, formerly head of the editorial department at the press, is now director.

The editing, production, business, and sales promotion of a publication is now handled by a staff of 17 persons. The complete process of preparing one book, from acquisition of the manuscript and editing to the finished book is a six-month operation.

The editorial department, headed by Charles East, is responsible for the editing of the book, as well as for procurement and evaluation of manuscripts.

The sales and promotion department is responsible for how the book sells. Stan Beatle is presently the only member of the sales and promotion staff and is at University Press through a $40,000 "incentive" grant from the Ford Foundation.

In its 32 of publishing, the press has won many recognitions for the books it has published. The Bancroft Prize, worth $4,000, went to C. Vann Woodward in 1952 for his "Origins of the New South" from the series he has authored, "History of the South."

Three of four Sydnor Awards for the best southern history book over a two-year period have gone to books published by LSU Press. They are "General E. Kirby Smith, C.S.A." by Joseph Parks, "Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South" by Dewey Grantham and "The Burden of Southern History" by C. Vann Woodward.

Other awards are Louisiana Library Association Award for the outstanding work published on Louisiana. It went to Hewitt Ballowe in 1948 for "Creole Folk Tales." Also in 1948, Caroline Durieux won a Fifty Books of the Year Award from the American Institute of Graphic Arts for her "43 Lithographs and Drawings."

Not satisfied with its record of past successes, the press, has plans to increase its staff size and the amount of books published yearly.

The Ford Foundation grant, which is to be matched by the University, is to be used to build up the staff of the press and to publish more books in the human and social sciences. LSU was one of 10 university presses to receive the grant.

The quota wil be raised to 30 books for the next fiscal year. The press is presently publishing 25 per year, a large increase from its earlier output of 6 books annually.